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## House of Representatives

THE HONORABLE DARRELL ISSA

### Security Clearance Oversight and Accountability Act

Thursday, January 22, 2009

*Madam Speaker, today I am proud to introduce the Security Clearance Oversight and Accountability Act. This Act is the result of the work the Subcommittee on Intelligence Community Management of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. I'm pleased, Mr. Issa, the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee during the 110th Congress, has again joined me as a co-sponsor of this legislation. I hope we will move this legislation quickly, given the strong bipartisan support that it enjoys. It will improve our insight into the security clearance process, and by doing so, improve the process itself.*

*Security clearances are the gateway to serving our Nation in national security, homeland security, and many foreign policy positions. Over time, the number of Federal employees and contractors holding clearances has stretched into the hundreds of thousands, clogging the clearance system and creating tremendous backlogs. Following the tragic attacks of September 11, 2001, our country faced an urgent need to expand its national security workforce, but hiring was hampered, and continues to be hampered, by our clearance system. It is imperative, especially as we transition to a new Administration, that security clearances not be a hindrance to our national security.*

*In 2004, Congress passed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act, IRTPA, which contained many provisions to improve the security clearance process. During the last Congress, our Subcommittee undertook a thorough review of the process and the progress toward meeting the goals of the Act. We had round-table meetings with representatives of industry and representatives of the Intelligence Community agencies. We carefully reviewed all reports submitted in response to the Intelligence Reform Act as well as GAO reports on security clearance reform in the Department of Defense. We held a series of open hearings with Administration witnesses and GAO to discuss accomplishments and areas where progress was lacking and we intend to continue that oversight in the 111th Congress. This bill will assist us in that task while improving the quality of our security clearances.*

*In addition to our own oversight, we requested that the GAO review the security clearance processes inside the Intelligence Community and report its findings. GAO brings decades of experience and deep expertise to this task. For more than 20 years its experts have examined the personnel security practices in the Department of Defense. This is the first time that Intelligence Community security practices will be subjected to such scrutiny. We look forward to Intelligence Community's cooperation with the GAO and to reviewing the results of GAO's work.*

*This bill is designed to remedy the shortcomings we identified last Congress. It takes a new approach to reform by requiring agencies to report to Congress annually on certain metrics related to the security clearance process. The metrics in this bill would enable Congress and HPSCI to perform effective oversight, would allow both branches to track improvements from year to year, and would allow agencies to judge the effectiveness of each other's security clearance process, improving confidence in the system. In a few areas where adequate metrics have not been developed, the Administration is required to propose metrics to Congress.*

*Just a few weeks ago, the Administration's Joint Security and Security Reform Team issued its proposal for security clearance process transformation. Their vision of a transformed process includes consolidated databases, interactive electronic applications, investigative techniques tailored to individual cases, automated investigation tools, automated clearance adjudication, and a more aggressive reinvestigation schedule for individual holding security clearances. Many of these reforms were required by the IRTPA and I am pleased to see their long-delayed implementation.*

*The security clearance process is a key to our national security establishment and we must make sure that it works as efficiently as possible. An effective security clearance system keeps out those who pose a security risk, while quickly identifying those who are trustworthy to work in the system. For too long it has been a troubled system. This legislation will allow us to confirm the necessary progress we must make in this critical area.*